



Re: Senate Bill 2

AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL EQUITY AND THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

Testimony by: Valerie Lepoutre, Manager of Peer Initiatives, Education & Training
NAMI Connecticut

Senator Looney, Senator Kasser, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children. My name is Valerie Lepoutre and I am the Manager of Peer Initiatives, Education, and Training for the National Alliance on Mental Illness Connecticut (NAMI CT). NAMI is the nation's largest mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMI CT provides education programs and support groups for people with mental health conditions and their loved ones and advocates for policies to improve the lives of people affected by mental health issues.

NAMI Connecticut envisions a world where all people affected in any way by mental health conditions – including children – experience the best possible quality of life and where mental health is accepted as an integral part of overall wellbeing. Our mission is to provide support, education, and advocacy for people in Connecticut who are affected by mental illness.

I am here today to support Senate Bill 2, An Act Concerning Social Equity and the Health, Safety and Education of Children.

According to NAMI, more than 31% of high school students have experienced a persistent feeling of sadness or hopelessness, and over 17% have seriously considered attempting suicide¹. At NAMI Connecticut, there has been an uptick of calls to our warmline since the beginning of the global pandemic. Many of these calls are made by young people in suicide-related crises.

In addition to integrating the principles and practices of social-emotional learning into programs and expanding access to care, it is necessary to establish a robust youth suicide prevention training program. As the co-chair of the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board's Attempt Survivor Committee and an instructor for a variety of evidence-based suicide prevention trainings, I am asking you to consider utilizing the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) model for both licensed health care professionals and professionals working in the school system. The ASIST model is a comprehensive suicide prevention/intervention training and also focuses on improving personal resiliency and self-concept among suicidal individuals, which is key for youth and adolescents experiencing thoughts about suicide.

I urge you to vote YES on Senate Bill 2- An Act Concerning Social Equity and the Health, Safety and Education of Children and ask you to include a representative from NAMI Connecticut with the implementation of the suicide prevention training.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Valerie Lepoutre
Manager of Peer Initiatives, Education, & Training

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¹ - <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2019/Supporting-Youth-Mental-Health>

² - <https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/applied-suicide-intervention-skills-training-asist>